

WALKING IN WISDOM (**Colossians 4:5**) Number #33

John T. Polk II, Editor

All Scripture quotations from the Editor are from the New King James Version

(Bible Resources may be found on: www.johntpolkll.com)

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Questions & Replies by John T. Polk II, www.johntpolkll.com

QUESTION: "Why is the idea of 'Santa Claus' so popular?"

ANSWER: Everyone loves a "giver," especially with little, or no, requirements added. Solomon wrote **Proverbs 17:8**: "A present is a precious stone in the eyes of its possessor; Wherever he turns, he prospers."

1. "A present" is a voluntary expression of love or concern from a friend or family member. It was given in the past, but remains as a "present" reminder of those thoughts. Truly, "it is the thought that counts." The "present" should be received with the same appreciation with which it was chosen by the giver. The make-believe "Santa Claus" was invented because everyone likes to receive a gift. The real Jesus Christ, however, taught that "It is more blessed to give than to receive" (**Acts 20:35**), as long as the gifts are paid for!

2. The power of gifts can be illustrated in the personal life of Jacob, who was fearful of his reunion with his brother Esau, "took what came to his hand as a present for Esau his brother" (**Genesis 32:13**), too much to wrap (**Genesis 32:14-15**)! Deep in famine and later in life, Jacob, now named Israel, thought he was dealing with a powerful man in Egypt (who was really his long-lost son!), told his other sons: "Take some of the best fruits of the land in your vessels and carry down a present for the man-a little balm and a little honey, spices and myrrh, pistachio nuts and almonds" (**Genesis 43:11**). He believed in the proverbial truth about gifts: "A man's gift makes room for him, And brings him before great men" (**Proverbs 18:16**); "Many entreat the favor of the nobility, And every man is a friend to one who gives gifts" (**Proverbs 19:6**). Rarely does anyone go wrong by gift-giving.

3. The "gift of God" is for everyone who lives by God's rule: "In the sweat of your face you shall eat bread" (**Genesis 3:19**), "As for every man to whom God has given riches and wealth, and given him power to eat of it, to receive his heritage and rejoice in his labor-this is the gift of God" (**Ecclesiastes 5:19**). If properly considered, "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning" (**James 1:17**). Unlike the mythical "Santa Claus," God requires our obedience to enjoy His gifts! God blesses with "His indescribable gift" (**2 Corinthians 9:15**), but the ultimate "gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord" (**Romans 6:23**). Jesus Christ "became the author of eternal salvation to all who obey Him" (**Hebrews 5:9**), so Jesus requires of "every creature," "He who believes and is baptized will be saved" (**Mark 16:15-16**).

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QUESTION: "Who were the 'wise men' who saw baby Jesus?"
ANSWER: No "wise men" did! The Bible account says nothing about their names, origin, or number. All of this has been added by uninspired men to the inspired Bible text, and therefore is only myth, not Bible fact.

1. (**Matthew 2:1-2**) "Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, wise men from the East came to Jerusalem, saying, 'Where is He who has been born King of the Jews? For we have seen His star in the East and have come to worship Him.'" (1) These wise men (Greek, *magi*) came "after Jesus was born," not the very day Jesus was born. How long after is seen when Herod killed "all the male children who were in Bethlehem and in all its districts, from two years old and under, according to the time which he determined from the wise men" (**Matthew 2:16**). Herod determined Jesus was no longer a "babe," but could have been over a year old by the time the "wise men" had made their inquiry. (2) "His star" had been seen "in the East" but the magi had to guess at the king. They came to "Herod the king" in Jerusalem, but Jesus was never "born King of the Jews!" This mistaken, and wrong, belief was attached to Jesus from birth to death, and ignored the fact that His "kingdom is not of this world" (**John 18:36**). The physical Jews were/are not Jesus' kingdom. (3) "Worship" was to be paid in the presence of Him who was to be worshipped, and not from their distant homes!

2. (**Matthew 2:9-11**) "When they heard the king, they departed; and behold, the star which they had seen in the East went before them, till it came and stood over where the young Child was. When they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceedingly great joy. And when they had come into the house, they saw the young Child with Mary His mother, and fell down and worshiped Him. And when they had opened their treasures, they presented gifts to Him: gold, frankincense, and myrrh." (1) "The star" then [miraculously] led them to the specific house [not the manger] where they found "the young Child [not a babe in swaddling cloths] with Mary His mother." That "star" could not have been some regular astronomical occurrence for none have ever been that direct, or low, so as to indicate a specific dwelling; nor has it ever been seen again with regularity; nor has any astronomical occurrence "stood" over one house. (2) They had seen "the star" which was "in the East;" or they were, themselves, "in the East" when they saw "the star." (3) And notice that this "star" was distinctly different from all other stars in the heaven!

3. Interestingly, the light of the star pointed the way to "the light of the world" (**John 8:12**), but when He died, "it was about the sixth hour, and there was darkness over all the earth until the ninth hour. Then the sun was darkened, and the veil of the temple was torn in two" (**Luke 23:44-45**). God's sacrifice ended the need for the earthly temple in Moses' Law.

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Real Zeal!

What do you call an aquamarine aquatic mammal that expresses genuine enthusiasm for gelatinous foods? A teal seal that feels real zeal for congealed meals! (Go ahead and groan, if you must.) No, I didn't write that joke (though those who know my sense of humor could easily see me coming up with it). But I do like it, and it is a great way to introduce the phrase "real zeal."

The word zeal, and its derivatives, are found a good bit in our English Bibles. Zeal is "great energy or enthusiasm for a cause or objective" (Oxford English Dictionary). Of course, there is good zeal and bad zeal. As Christians, we need to be concerned with "real zeal" i.e. godly zeal. Let's look at a few Bible passages to help us.

Real godly zeal is based upon His word (Romans 10:2, "*For I bear them witness that they have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge.*")

Real godly zeal utilizes talents and builds up the church (1 Corinthians 14:12, "*...since you are zealous for...gifts, let it be for the edification of the church that you seek to excel.*")

Real godly zeal gets others excited for the Lord (2 Corinthians 9:2, "*...your zeal has stirred up the majority.*")

Real godly zeal promotes goodness (Galatians 4:18, "*But it is good to be zealous in a good thing always...*")

Real godly zeal is concerned for others (Colossians 4:13, "*For I bear him witness that he has a great zeal for you...*")

Real godly zeal culminates in kind deeds (Titus 2:14, "*...His own special people, zealous for good works.*")

So...let's get excited for the Lord and His cause and go forth! "*...be zealous for the fear of the LORD all the day...*" (Proverbs 23:7). Let us all reveal the real deal zeal that is God's ideal!

- Edd Sterchi

Salted Speech **Colossians 4:6**

~ **Pain is inevitable. Suffering is optional.**

~ **"Politicians are the same all over. They promise to build a bridge even where there is no river."**

~Nikita Khrushchev, Russian Soviet politician

~ **"A politician thinks of the next election; a statesman thinks of the next generation."**

~James Freeman Clarke

~ **"An honest politician stands out like a do-it-yourself haircut."**

~Arnold H. Glasow (1905–1999)

THEOPHILUS

